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X-MEN 2099
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DIRECT EDITION
THE MYSTERY OF
THE DRIVER!

AS THE HOURS PASS MIDNIGHT, THE SUNLIT CALL OF THE OPEN HIGHWAY BECOMES A SIREN'S LULLABY, DECEPTIVE AND DANGEROUS...
LURING THE TRAVELER ONTO LONELY BACKROADS WHERE VISION BLURS AND LANDMARKS FADE.
LOST IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY, THE TRAVELER ABANDONS ALL SENSE OF DIRECTION AND DESTINATION...
...AND HEADS STRAIGHT INTO MADNESS.
TELL ME AGAIN, TIMOTHY FITZGERALD...
I'M CRAZY FOR YOU, LUNA...
...CERTIFIABLY, PSYCHOPATHICALLY INSANE.
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
CROSSED SIGNALS
OVER THE SPEED LIMIT WITH
JOHN FRANCIS MOORE
WRITER
RON LIM
PENCILER
MARK MCKENNA
INKER
JANICE CHIANG
LETTERER
TOM SMITH
COLORIST
JOEY CAVALIERI
EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO
MONSTER TRUCKER

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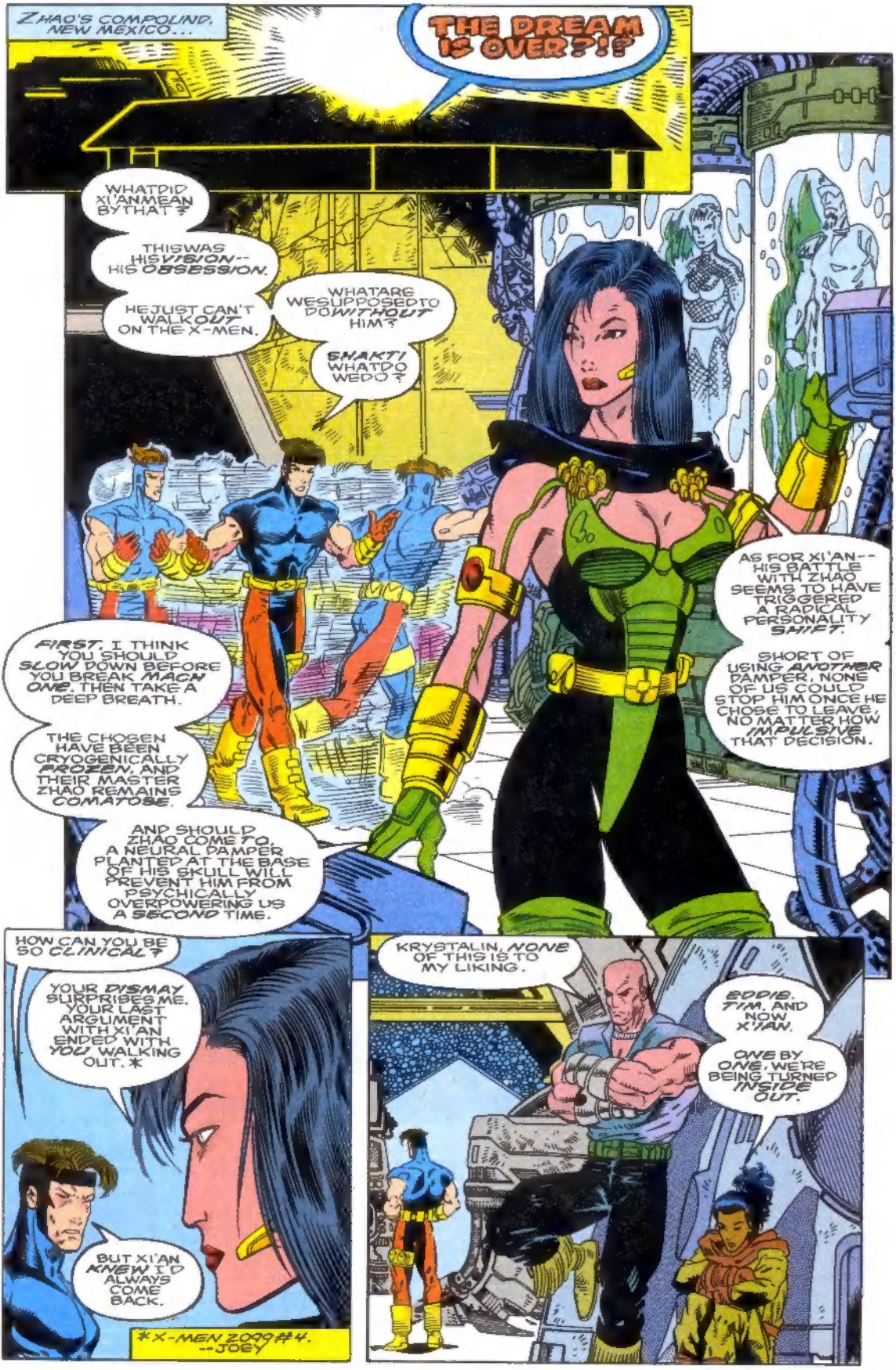
YOU LET YOUR WILD SIDE SMOLDER FOR TOO LONG, DARLING.
ALL YOU NEEDED WAS SOMEONE TO POUR GASOLINE ON THE FIRE.
NOW SEE HOW DIFFERENT YOU ARE FROM THE HESITANT, FRIGHTENED CHILD I BROUGHT TO THE CONTROLLER'S DARKROOM*.
ATOMIC ROSE
*X-MEN 2099 #4.
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO KISS YOU OR KILL YOU.
I GET NEXT TO YOU, AND I CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT.
WHAT'S TO THINK ABOUT? YOU FEEL THE CONNECTION AS STRONGLY AS I DO.
WE'RE FATED TO BE TOGETHER.
MAYBE WE'RE CURSED.
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THE ANGUISH YOU PUT ME THROUGH IN THE DARKROOM--
--MAKING ME RELIVE REIKO'S DEATH FOR YOUR OWN AMUSEMENT.
SO NO GAMES-- TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT FROM ME--
--BECAUSE I WON'T BE USED AGAIN.
YOU UNDERSTAND NOTHING ABOUT ME.
EVERYTHING I SAID I MEANT--
KISS YOUR DATE GOODNIGHT, TIMOTHY...

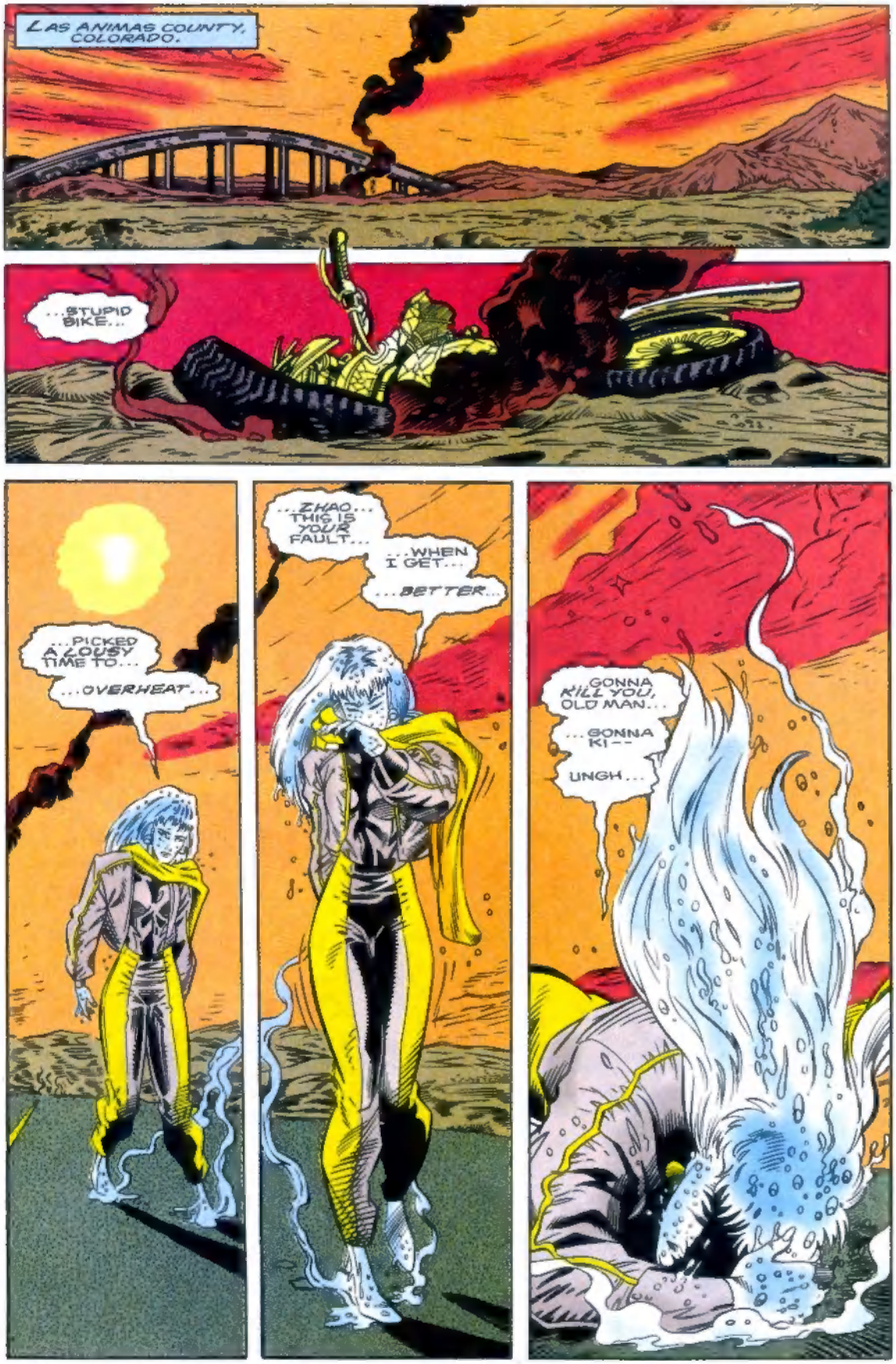
IT'S TIME WE GOT MOVING.
A FRIEND OF YOURS?
XI'AN CHI XAN. UNTIL YESTERDAY LEADER OF THE X-MEN. XI'AN, THIS IS...
LA LUNÁTICA. THE PSYCHIC VAMPIRE.
I RECOGNIZED HER FROM YOUR DESCRIPTION. NICE HAIR.
NOW IF YOU'RE THROUGH MESSING AROUND, WE HAVE BUSINESS IN EL PASO.
THE DRIVER?
NOT YET. BUT WE'RE CLOSING IN ON HIM.
EL PASO? WAIT. TAKE ME WITH YOU.
RIGHT. GIVE ME A REASON.
FOR TEN YEARS I WAS A SLAVE, A KEPT ANIMAL, OF AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE THEATRE OF PAIN.
MY TOUCH TRIGGERS INTENSE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS, FEAR, PAIN, ANGUISH--
--TRAUMA THAT THE THEATRE RECORDED FOR THE SADISTIC ENTERTAINMENT OF THEIR CLIENTS.
I THOUGHT WHEN I NEUTRALIZED THE THIRTEENTH CONTROLLER I WAS FINALLY FREE.
BUT THE THEATRE DOESN'T WANT TO LET ME GO. THEY'VE SENT THEIR TRACKERS AFTER ME.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN KEEP RUNNING.
HELP ME.

DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING FROM ME, BABE.
I'M THROUGH KNOCKING MYSELF OUT FOR EVERY MUTANT WITH A SOB STORY.
IF FITZGERALD WANTS YOU WITH US, IT'S HIS DECISION.
LET'S GO, ROMEO. I DON'T HAVE FOREVER.
umrm...
YOU CAN RIDE WITH ME, LUNA...
ONE SECOND, CHICA...
SO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER-- I DON'T BUY THIS DAMSEL IN DISTRESS NUMBER FOR A MOMENT.
YOU CAN PLAY WITH YOUNG FITZGERALD'S HEART AND HORMONES ALL YOU WANT--
--BUT STAY OUT OF MY WAY.
UNDERSTOOD.
AND IF YOU TOUCH ME AGAIN--
I'LL RIP YOUR ARM FROM ITS SOCKET.
SO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.
I'M ON, FITZGERALD.
HOLD ON TIGHT. THIS BIKE SMOKES.
SO DO I, SWEET THING. SO DO I.

LATER...
ARE YOU ROSE?
YEAH, WHAT'S IT TO YOU, COWBOY?
I'M LOOKING FOR THIS WOMAN. HAVE YOU SEEN HER?
A LOT OF PEOPLE COME THROUGH HERE.
YOU WOULD REMEMBER HER.
LOOK, PARTNER, I GOT ZERO TOLERANCE FOR TRACERS HOUNDING MY CUSTOMERS.
YOU WANT A DRINK, I'LL FIX YOU ONE.
IF NOT, TAKE A WALK.
DO NOT ANGER ME, ROSE.
THAT WOULD BE UNWISE.
ANSWER THE QUESTION.
SWEET MOTHER OF THOR...
HAVE YOU SEEN THE WOMAN, ROSE?
YES...
SHE LEFT WITH TWO BIKERS ABOUT THREE HOURS AGO...
YOU CAN CHECK THE SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE...
I KEEP THE CAMERAS ROLLING TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY...


ZHAO'S COMPOUND, NEW MEXICO...
THE DREAM IS OVER?!?
WHAT DID XI'AN MEAN BY THAT?
THIS WAS HIS VISION-- HIS OBSESSION.
HE JUST CAN'T WALK OUT ON THE X-MEN.
WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WITHOUT HIM?
SHAKTI, WHAT DO WE DO?
AS FOR XI'AN-- HIS BATTLE WITH ZHAO SEEMS TO HAVE TRIGGERED A RADICAL PERSONALITY SHIFT.
SHORT OF USING ANOTHER DAMPER, NONE OF US COULD STOP HIM ONCE HE CHOSE TO LEAVE, NO MATTER HOW IMPULSIVE THAT DECISION.
FIRST, I THINK YOU SHOULD SLOW DOWN BEFORE YOU BREAK MACH ONE. THEN TAKE A DEEP BREATH.
THE CHOSEN HAVE BEEN CRYOGENICALLY FROZEN, AND THEIR MASTER ZHAO REMAINS COMATOSE.
AND SHOULD ZHAO COME TO, A NEURAL DAMPER PLANTED AT THE BASE OF HIS SKULL WILL PREVENT HIM FROM PSYCHICALLY OVERPOWERING US A SECOND TIME.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CLINICAL?
YOUR DISMAY SURPRISES ME. YOUR LAST ARGUMENT WITH XI'AN ENDED WITH YOU WALKING OUT. *
BUT XI'AN KNEW I'D ALWAYS COME BACK.
* X-MEN 2099 #4. --JOEY
KRYSTALIN, NONE OF THIS IS TO MY LIKING.
EDDIE. TIM. AND NOW XI'AN.
ONE BY ONE, WE'RE BEING TURNED INSIDE OUT.

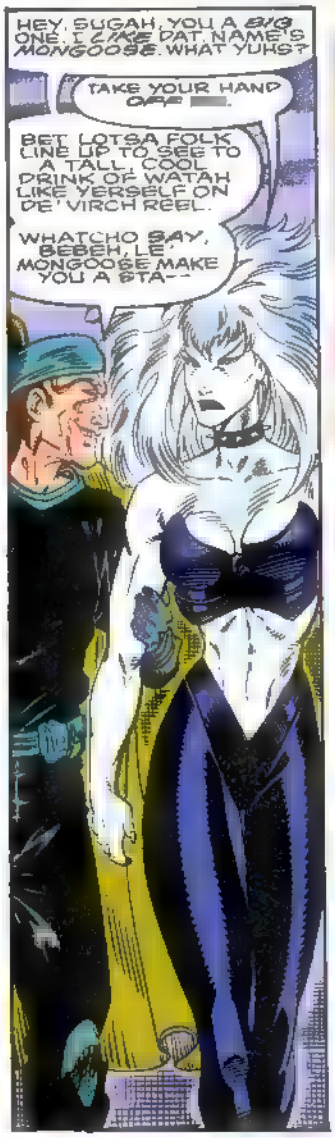
LETTING FROSTBITE LEAVE WITH ONE OF THE BIKES WAS A MISTAKE.
I'VE HEARD THIS ARGUMENT BEFORE.
IF YOU DESIRE JUSTICE, BE SATISFIED THAT THE GENETIC INSTABILITY CAUSED BY ZHAO'S EXPERIMENTS WILL EVENTUALLY KILL HER.
AND UNLESS I FIND A WAY TO REVERSE THE CELLULAR DETERIORATION IN THE OTHER THREE, THEY WILL DIE AS WELL.
THEN LET THEM DIE, SHAKTI.
THE FACT THAT THESE KILLERS ARE MUTANTS DOESN'T MAKE THEM YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.
IF IT WERE UP TO ME, I'D TORCH THIS PLACE.
I'M GOING BACK TO SANTA FE.
TEN EAGLES.
VICTOR.
WAIT.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, HENRI? DO YOU INTEND TO LEAVE AS WELL?
I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT'S THE POINT OF SUPERSPEED WHEN YOU HAVE NO PLACE TO GO?


LAS ANIMAS COUNTY, COLORADO.
...STUPID BIKE...
...PICKED A LOUSY TIME TO...
...OVERHEAT...
...ZHAO... THIS IS YOUR FAULT...
...WHEN I GET...
...BETTER...
...GONNA KILL YOU, OLD MAN...
...GONNA KI--
UNGH...

...GREAT...
...I'M MELTING...
VROOOM
I AM NO ILLUSION, PATRICE CAHILL.
YOUR RIDE, FROSTBITE.
WHO THE SHOCK ARE YOU?
...HEAT'S MAKING ME HALLUCINATE...

EL PASO.
EL MERCADO GRANDE
A MONDOPLEX?
ARE WE GOING SHOPPING?
I'LL EXPLAIN ONCE WE STORE OUR BIKES.
CATACLYSM SIX THOUSANDS.
SMOKIN' WHEELS, AMIGOS.
FIFTY A DAY. COVERS PARKING AND SECURITY.
DONE.
SNIKT!
SO YOU KNOW--BOTH BIKES ARE ARMED WITH B/F STORM WARNING ALARM SYSTEMS.
ANYONE THAT TOUCHES THEM WITHOUT THE KEY CODE'LL GET FRIED!
NOT TO WORRY. THIS AIN'T NO CHOPSHOP. I RUN A RESPECTABLE PARKING LOT.
GOOD TO HEAR.
BESIDES, IF ANYTHING DID HAPPEN TO THE CAT SIXES--
--I'VE GOT MY OWN ALARM SYSTEM.

HOLD ONTO YOUR CREDIT CARDS, BOYS AND GIRLS.
YOU ARE ENTERING THE ONE-STOP SHOPPING CONVENIENCE, THE BIGGEST BLACK MARKET THIS SIDE OF THE BORDER.
INFOMARTS UPSTAIRS AND FLESHPOTS ON THE INSIDE LEVEL.
BACK OFF PERSONAL DEFENSE ARMOR AT REASONABLE PRICE...
PERSONAL DEFEN SYSTEMS
"TO FIT YOUR BUDGE
I FEEL LIKE A KID IN A CANDY STORE.
WATCH WHAT YOU PUT IN YOUR MOUTH.


HEY, SUGAH, YOU A BIG ONE. I LIKE DAT. NAME'S MONGOOSE. WHAT YUHS?
TAKE YOUR HAND OFF
BET LOTSA FOLK LINE UP TO SEE TO A TALL COOL DRINK OF WATAH LIKE YERSELF ON DE' VIRCH REEL.
WHATCHO SAY, BEBEH, LE' MONGOOSE MAKE YOU A BTA--

ADRENOSPHERES
"FOR THAT RUSH OF ENERGY"
ARRGH!
WHACK!
THINK YOU'VE GOT THE CORNER ON DEGENERACY, CRETIN?
YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE I'VE BEEN.
POK
POK
POK
POK
POK
IF I SEE YOU AGAIN, I'LL RIP YOUR HEART OUT.
UNDERSTAND?
I'LL TAKE THAT GURGLE AS A YES.

THIS THUMBSCAN LOCK CAN'T KEEP ME OUT.
MY TOUCH WILL EAT THROUGH THE MECHANISM.
EMPLO ONLY
THERE.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, SQUID?
BACKROOM'S OFF LIMITS TO CUSTOMERS.
A LITTLE MAN WITH A BIG GUN.
WHAT A TIRED CLICHE.
THUNK
YOUR HAND IS DISSOLVING MY GUN.
DISRUPTING IT AT A MOLECULAR LEVEL, ACTUALLY.
OH NO, YOU'RE XU'IAN, AREN'T YOU?
I'M HERE TO SEE HAIKU.
LET HIM PASS, ULYSSES.
IT'S SO NICE TO SEE ANOTHER OLD FRIEND.

THE MASK IS AN OSMIOTIC SYNTHETIC OF MY OWN CREATION--
--IT ALLOWS YOUR SKIN TO BREATHE WHILE COVERING IT COMPLETELY.
YOU MAY OPEN YOUR EYES NOW.
I LIKE IT.
IT'S YOU--BUT CAN YOU FEEL ANYTHING?
LET ME CHECK.
WHAT'S THE VERDICT?
OH, YEAH.

THIS THUMBSCAN LOCK CAN'T KEEP ME OUT.
MY TOUCH WILL EAT THROUGH THE MECHANISM.
EMPLO ONLY
THERE.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, SQUID?
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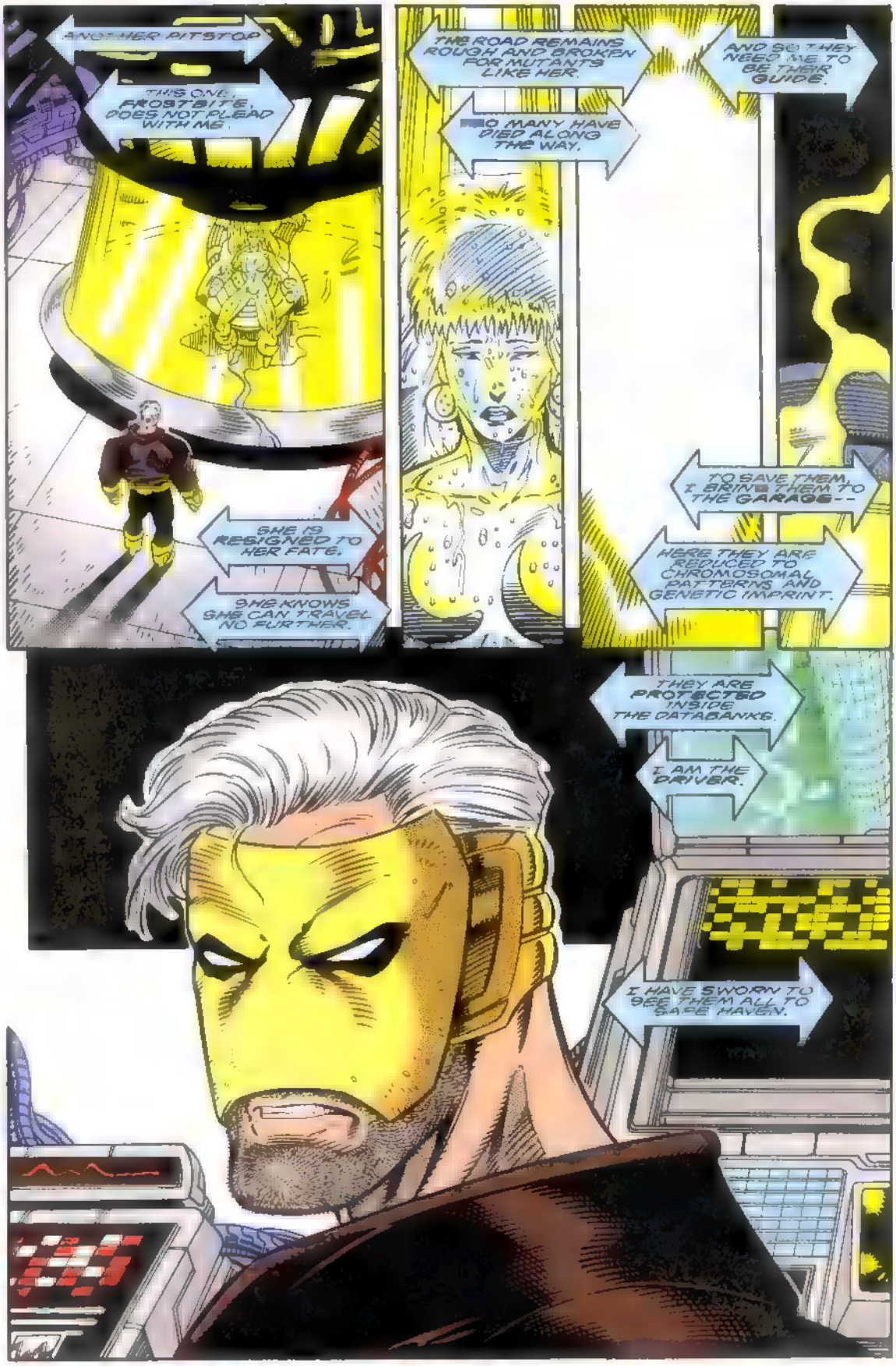
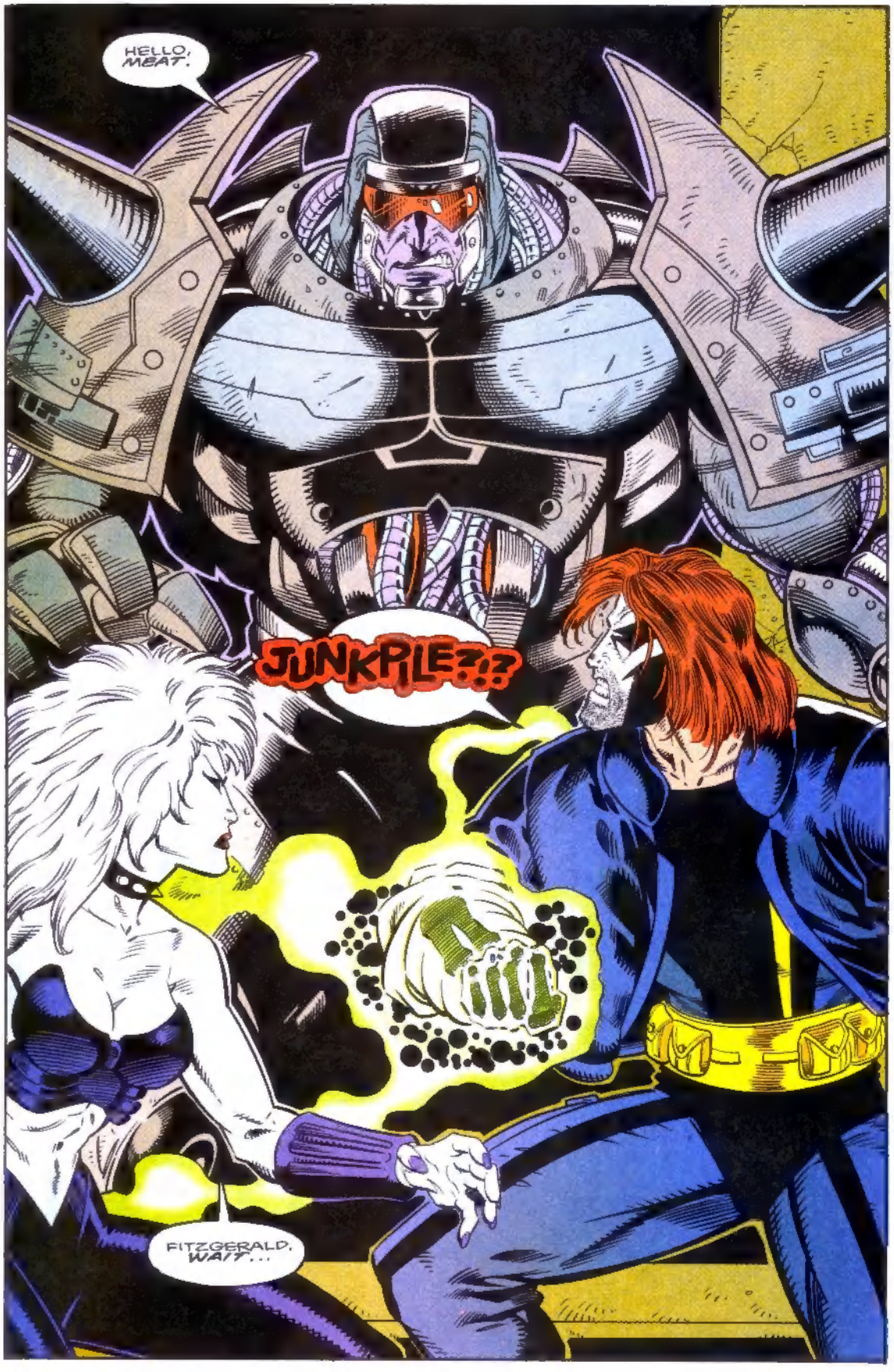
OH NO, YOU'RE XU'IAN, AREN'T YOU?
I'M HERE TO SEE HAIKU.
LET HIM PASS, ULYSSES.
IT'S SO NICE TO SEE ANOTHER OLD FRIEND.

HAIKU, BEEN A LONG TIME.
YOU'RE LOOKING... DIFFERENT.
I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU HERE, XI'AN.
THEN LET'S GO SOMEWHERE ELSE.
THAT IS IF YOU'RE STILL MOBILE NOW THAT YOU'RE WRAPPED UP IN ALL THAT NEURO-CIRCUITRY.
TALK TO ME, HAIKU.
HAIKU?
I DON'T BELIEVE I'M GETTING THE SILENT TREATMENT FROM AN IRON MAIDEN.
IF YOU WISH TO INTERFACE WITH HAIKU, YOU WILL HAVE TO GO ON-LINE.
SINCE THE DOMINO, HAIKU CONDUCTS BUSINESS EXCLUSIVELY IN THE NET.
THESE WILL GIVE YOU A/V NET ACCESS.
CYBERSIM SHADES?
WHAT A FASHIONABLE MEANS OF TRANSFERRING ELECTRONIC IMPULSES INTO SENSORY STIMULATION.
UGH. ALL THIS CYBERNETVERSE VOODOO GIVES ME ONE BIG--

--HEADACHE.
YOU HAVE NERVE COMING HERE, XI'AN.
HAI--
ZZROWW!
UGHHH!
IF IT HELPS YOU I WILL SHIFT MY ARCHETYPE TO SOMETHING MORE HUMAN.
BETTER.
WE HAVEN'T SPOKEN SINCE THE LAWLESS DISBANDED. WHY ARE YOU HERE NOW?
I NEED A FAVOR.
A FAVOR?
YOU ARE AS ASTOUNDINGLY ARROGANT AS EVER.
AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO ME, I SHOULD BLIND YOU--
--OR BURN A PATTERN ON YOUR OPTIC NERVES THAT WOULD STAY WITH YOU THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.
THE ONLY THING I WANT TO GIVE YOU IS PAIN.


ANOTHER PITSTOP.
THIS ONE, FROSTBITE, DOES NOT PLEAD WITH ME.
SHE IS RESIGNED TO HER FATE.
SHE KNOWS SHE CAN TRAVEL NO FURTHER.
THE ROAD REMAINS ROUGH AND BROKEN FOR MUTANTS LIKE HER.
SO MANY HAVE DIED ALONG THE WAY.
AND SO THEY NEED ME TO BE THEIR GUIDE.
TO SAVE THEM, I BRING THEM TO THE GARAGE--
HERE THEY ARE REDUCED TO CHROMOSOMAL PATTERNS AND GENETIC IMPRINT.
THEY ARE PROTECTED INSIDE THE DATABANKS.
I AM THE DRIVER.
I HAVE SWORN TO SEE THEM ALL TO SAFE HAVEN.

THE MERCADO GRANDE.
MMMMM... STOP...
NO, REALLY...
...STOP.
IS SOMETHING WRONG, FITZGERALD?
EVERYTHING'S WRONG.
YOU'RE NOT ACTING LIKE A WOMAN ON THE RUN.
I THINK YOU HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT...
NOT THE POINT.
YOU'RE KEEPING SOMETHING FROM ME.
EVERYTHING I TOLD YOU IS TRUE...
BUT...
I'D ALREADY MADE PLANS TO HEAD TO EL PASO BEFORE I MET YOU...
I WAS HEADING SOUTH TO MEET SOMEONE.
WHO?
ME


HELLO, MEAT.
JUNKPILE?!?
FITZGERALD. WAIT...

WAIT. NOTHING.
THIS TINKER TOY TERROR KILLED SERPENTINA... MY FRIEND.
HE HASN'T BEGUN TO PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO HER.*
*X-MEN 2099 #3.--JOEY
KERRASH!
IF I HAVE TO DRAIN EVERY OUNCE OF POWER RUNNING THROUGH THIS MALL...
... I'M GOING TO SEE HIM DEAD.
BRRAZZZKKK

SOME GREASE PAINT ON YOUR FACE DON'T CHANGE NOTHING, MEAT.
YOU'RE STILL A LITTLE BOY PRETENDING TO BE A MAN.
TOO BAD I'M NOT GONNA GIVE YOU TIME TO GROW UP.
WAK!
Unggghhh...
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU PUT YOURSELF BACK TOGETHER AFTER XI'AN PECKED YOU IN THE SYNGE CASINO--
--BUT I'LL FINISH THE JOB AND REDUCE YOU TO SCRAP.
JMF SOLD HERE!
I'M GONNA CRAM THAT SELF RIGHTEOUS ATTITUDE DOWN YOUR THROAT, BOY.
I HAD ENOUGH OF THAT HOLIER THAN THOU SNOT FROM XI'AN.

STOP!
OUT OF MY WAY, LUNA!
THIS DOESN'T CONCERN YOU.
YOU'RE WRONG.
FIGHTING MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL--
--NOT IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE WORKING TOGETHER.
HAH.
NOT IN A MILLION YEARS, BABY.

EXILES: BRIMSTONE LOVE